

Higher Education Student Assistance

Mission

To make college affordable, to allow students more choice in selecting a college, and to increase college preparation.

Summary of Activities

Student financial assistance provided by the state includes both programs administered by the **State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana (SSACI)** and the portion of institutional financial aid derived from general operating appropriations to the public colleges and universities.



SSACI has three main areas of concentration: Grants and Scholarships, Early Intervention and Education Programs, and Technology, Research and Analysis. Grants and scholarships administered by SSACI include the Higher Education Award, Freedom of Choice grant, Twenty-first Century Scholarship, National Guard Supplemental grant, Part-Time Grant, Special Program grants for nurses, working students, minority students, and Fee Remission Grants for children of disabled veterans and similar students. Students who receive Core 40 and Academic Honors diplomas in high school are eligible for higher levels of assistance.

In addition to administering a number of Federal programs, SSACI also conducts early intervention programs for Twenty-first Century Scholars and education and outreach programs for all students, parents, high school counselors, and financial aid professionals. It conducts research to better understand the needs of Hoosier students and families.

Institutional aid appropriated directly to public universities includes statutory and non-statutory tuition and fee waivers and institutional grants and scholarships. Statutory tuition and fee waivers administered by universities include senior citizen fee waivers and county scholarships. Non-statutory waivers may be granted at the discretion of institutional trustees to a variety of students including faculty and staff and their spouses and dependents, graduate and undergraduate teaching and research assistants, and students with specific talents or abilities. Other institutional aid includes need-based grants and merit scholarships.

External Factors

The primary factors affecting student assistance are the continuously rising cost of attending college; the increasing number of high school graduates going to college; the increasing number of graduates earning Core 40 and Academic Honors diplomas; the growing number of students who attend college part-time; the increasing reliance of students on loans to finance their education; the slow growth in federal student assistance programs; and increasingly strained state revenues and economic forecasts.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

In 2000-01, Indiana's need-based aid programs administered by SSACI ranked seventh nationally in grant dollars per resident population, eighth in grant dollars per resident college-age population, and seventh in grant dollars to undergraduates per full-time undergraduate enrollment. In 2002-03 SSACI funded \$117 million in major grants to 42,000 students, plus \$20 million in Twenty-First Century Scholarships and other special program grants to nearly 14,000 students.

Throughout 2001-03, SSACI's Office of Twenty-First Century Scholars expanded its early intervention programs utilizing a five-year \$25 million federal GEARUP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant by increasing the number and intensity of contacts with Scholars and by implementing the GEARUP Summer Scholarship program.

In 2001-02 SSACI implemented a special billing system for its fee remission programs. The system allows public colleges and universities to electronically bill SSACI for covered tuition and fees, thus improving efficiency and reducing administrative costs for the institutions and SSACI. It also enables SSACI to track statutory mandated eligibility requirements.





Whenever possible SSACI introduces real-time, online web-based internet systems to increase its efficiency and services. In 2001-03, SSACI improved its online systems eGRADS, CHIPS, and WERRS. eGRADS allows financial aid professionals at nearly 100 colleges and universities around the state to check on the eligibility and awards for any of their enrolled students. CHIPS allows high school counselors to list pertinent data on their Honors and Core 40 graduates. WERRS allows work-study students to apply for jobs and SSACI to match students with particular skills, as described in their on-line resumes, to employers needing those skills.

In 2002 SSACI fully implemented eStudent, an online system that allows students to check on the status of the financial aid applications and awards, update their addresses, and most importantly to change their first-college choice in real-time. In addition, SSACI developed Scholar Track to follow the early intervention activities of 21st Century Scholars and SIFRS, Scholars Internet Financial Reporting System, which enables SSACI to track online the budgets of the 16 early intervention sites around the state.

Plans for the Biennium

SSACI plans to maintain its national leadership position in financial aid by meeting the financial needs of Hoosier families; to increase the number of students eligible for part-time grants; to increase the range and depth of early intervention programs for Scholars and parents; to improve its outreach and education programs for students, parents, high school counselors, and financial aid professionals; and to improve and develop online applications to better serve students, parents, and institutions.

SSACI will continue to work with the Federal government to renew the GEARUP grant which expires in FY04; implement an electronic billing system for its Nursing Scholarship and Minority Teacher programs; and monitor the impact of setting maximum awards for public college students, a strategy taken for the biennium in order to maximize the number and size of awards within a fiscally responsible budget.

In recent years, 50% of SSACI grant dollars for 29% of the students have gone to the independent (private) colleges of Indiana, with almost all the remainder going to the public colleges. SSACI expects that over the next 4 years it will impose slow growth in subsidized tuition by holding constant or slowly growing the maximum awards for all sectors, public, private, and proprietary.

